

Western Films and Youth Dressing Pattern in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract

This research is focused on the influence of western films on youths dressing pattern in Taraba State University, Jalingo. The study postulated that it is possible for youths to be dissuaded from indecent dressing projected by western films. The survey design was used to gather the data for the study in which 220 questionnaires were administered among students of Taraba State University, Jalingo and 200 was retrieved and used for the analysis. Findings showed that hip hop/hippies, corporate/cocktail and make up/hairstyle are the most imitated forms/styles of dressings by youths in American films and that such forms of dressing to a large extent influences youths choice of dressing. Some of the recommendations proffered for reversing the trend are: proper parenting and counseling, uncompromising religious teaching and establishment of dress code by tertiary institutions.

Keywords: American films, Youths, Dressing, Influence, tertiary institution.

1. Background of the study

Communication, according to Lucas (2014), is fundamentally a human attribute that involves the generation, packaging and transmission of ideas or symbols by a source to a receiver with an expected impact or feedback. Amoruwa (2008) elaborates on this stating that communication can be said to be a process whereby the ideas, feelings, emotions, perceptions, images and opinions of a person are transmitted to another. In these submissions the source brings to bear on the decoder some impact which he (source) purposefully or unknowingly intends. Here the source transmits stimuli to modify the behavior of others. The stimuli transmitted may be ideas, feelings, and images among others. When the stimuli is in image form, then one of the two forms of communication is applied, namely the non verbal communication.

The non verbal communication is usually perceived visually and emotionally. According to Lucas (2014), this form of communication which is also called “visual communication is hinged on sight and symbols. According to Amoruwa (2008), one of the most obvious forms of visual communication is dressing and dressing conveys various signals in the visual perception level of both the dresser and those who observe them. The adage that states the way you dress is the way you will be addressed becomes effective here. Jennifer and Molly (2002) state that costumes convey messages that point to an era, stages, status, and profession, among others. Jennifer and Molly (2002) are discussing costume, the technical term for dress in the performing art of stage (theatre) film and television.

Wilson and Goldfarb (2002) see dressing or costume as having vital role in the art of communication. They identify six (6) objectives of dressing/costumes three of which include the following: indicating historical period of a play and the locale in which it is set, secondly, indicating the nature of individual character or group in a play; their stations in life, their occupations, their personalities (their age, their perspective to life); and thirdly, showing relationship among characters, separating major characters from minor ones, contrasting one group from another.

Stressing on the role of costumes or dress or clothing, Wilson and Gold Farb (2002) further submits that:

costumes (dress) play a significant role in daily life. People wear cloths not only for comfort but to convey information about themselves. If we look around us, we are actually surrounded by costumes; the formal, subdued uniform of a police officer, the sparkling outfit of a marching at a football game; sports gear, such as hockey and baseball uniforms; caps and gowns at a graduation; a priest's cassock; brightly colored bathing suits at a swimming pool.

One of the channels used for transmitting visual stimuli is the film and television. Dress or costuming on stage, film and television is a necessary complementary adjunct (Wilson and Goldfarb, 2002). The costumes worn by actors and actresses on film are being copied by people of various age and profession across the globe therefore, this study is based on investigating the influence the costumes worn by actors/actresses have on youths in Tertiary institutions.

2. Statement of the Problem

In recent times, it has been noted that a change is taking place as regards to the mode of dressing by younger

population. Omede (2011) notes that indecent appearance has come to characterize the dress pattern of many students on the campuses of higher learning in Nigeria. There is hardly any higher institution of learning in this country that is not faced with this nauseating problem. The way students on these campuses of learning particularly, the female ones, dress seductively leaves much to be desired. What the girls call skirts that they wear is just “one inch” longer than their pants. When they put on such dresses, they struggle to sit down, find difficulty in climbing machines, cross gutters as well as pick anything from the ground...

These students copy foreign wears from the screen which are mostly different from their traditional norms and values. Therefore, the researcher investigates the influence of western films on youth dressing in Nigerian tertiary institution.

3. The study Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To ascertain the level at which youths are exposed to American Films
- To determine how exposure to western films influence the dressing pattern of Taraba State University students.
- To determine how to dissuade youth from indecent dressing.

4. Questions of the study

Based on the problem and the objectives of the study, the following research questions have been drawn to guide the study.

- What is the level at which youths are exposed to American Films
- To what extent has the exposure to western films influence the dressing pattern of Taraba State University students?
- How can youth be dissuaded toward indecent dressing?

5. Explicating Literature

Films are powerful instrument that can build or destroy people's culture due to its conversational nature. It also plays a role in the daily lives of men and women in the way they perceive and conceived themselves and in the way they conduct their own lives (Aldana 2004:1).

A lot of research, most especially in developed countries suggests that visual media e.g Television (Films) influence a range of attitudes and behaviors among youths. Huesmann & Taylor (2003) are of the view that television (films) has authority over young people's decision. They assert that youth just accept what the television (films) tells them without question. Keyes (2000:1) raised fears about the negative influence that films have on youth culture. “Youths are particularly vulnerable to outside influence from their films sets because their values and ideals have not yet fully developed”. Thus they are prone to alteration by any slightest means. Chari (2005) adds that, their world is erected by the stories they hear, see and tell. films play significant role in this process, hence the importance of who should determine what should shape people's perception and how. Therefore, films in terms of fashion has influenced the youths, thereby making them believe in a particular way of dressing. The kind of clothes used in acting, stage music, advertisement are presented to the society as the best dressing to make one look good.

Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found that attractiveness of the movie character associated with the rating of female character with their wishful identification could lead to modeling effect in terms of the appearance of the women. Therefore, women are more likely to consciously model their own appearance after the model character. This leads to making TV character appealing as role models to young adults, especially women. This in turn gives an emphasis on the unique connection between audience and the media figures.

TV (films) is highly visual and seeing something on TV (films), like fashion, may have an impact on the audience. When local TV programme aired fashion close to home fashion design, there is more likely that the news proximate it and it is found to be realistic to them (Weitzer and Kubrin, 2004). TV (Film) as a medium has an influence on the dressing of youths (Nelson, and McLeod. 2005).

According to Dominick (2005):

throughout history, films have been collectors, producers and distributors of social knowledge. He emphasized this notion by explaining that the three defining features of films are that first, they attract the most specialized group of audience, and second, films are the most in tune with demographic, economic and social trends. Finally, films can influence social trends.

6. Related theory to the study

Theories are of great relevance in every academic endeavour. This study is anchored on the Social Learning

theory. The Social Learning Theory was propounded by Albert Bandura who was a psychologist at Stanford University. The theory suggests that much learning takes place through observing the behaviour of others (Anaeto, Onabanjo, & Osifeso, 2008). Bandura (1986) proposed that:

Individuals develop general behaviour and attitudes by modeling the behaviour of others. Individuals learn or model behaviour, values, attitudes, and skills through the observation of other individuals, or through observations of electronic or print media. This coincides with the effect of mass media on its audience, not only confined to the behaviour of others in the vicinity.

Base on theory, people learn from observation first before they actually carry out certain actions. Therefore, through exposure to films, youths acquire knowledge on fashion/styles worn by actors and actress in films, as such they chose role models who influences their perception, attitude and behavioral patterns and desire in terms of dressing.

7. Methodology

The researcher used the survey research method. A total number of two hundred and twenty questionnaires were distributed to undergraduate students of Taraba State University. The purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used.

Purposively, 8 departments were chosen from the four faculties namely (Mass Communication, Economic, Physics, Geography, Biological Sciences, Sociology, Administration and Planning) and a simple random sampling was used to select two hundred and twenty (220) students (respondents). Pie charts were employed for the representation of data while SPSS version 20 was used for the analysis of data which consists of frequency counts and simple percentages

Presentation and analysis of findings

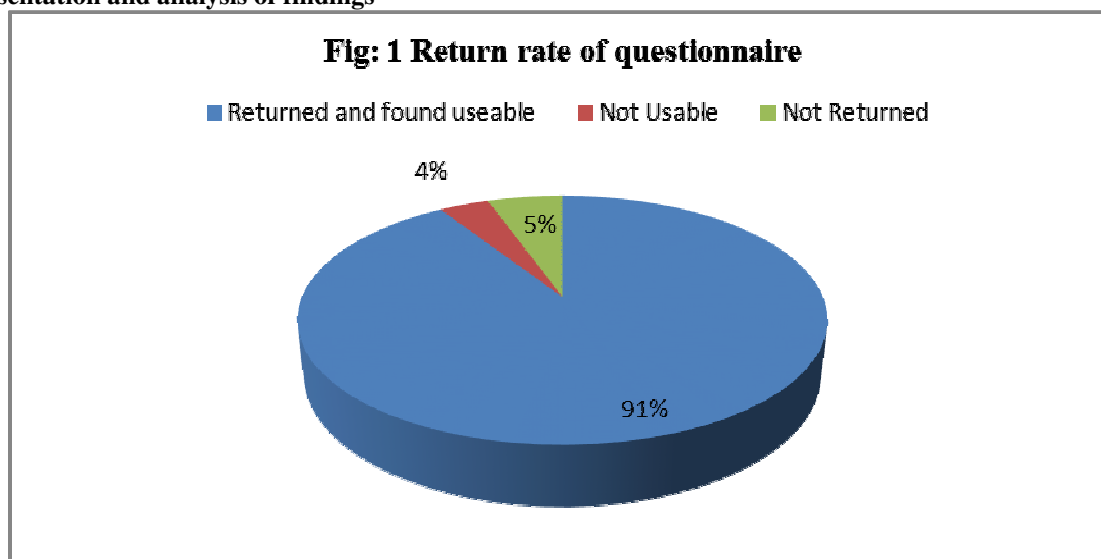


Figure 1 above shows that the return rate of the questionnaire is 91% while the mortality rate is 10%. This implies that, the return rate is higher than the mortality rate. Therefore, the copies returned are considered adequate enough to represent the population. Therefore, the presentation and analysis of data that were obtained from the questionnaire was therefore based on the two hundred copies that were returned and found usable.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: WHAT IS THE LEVEL AT WHICH YOUTHS ARE EXPOSED TO AMERICAN FILMS?

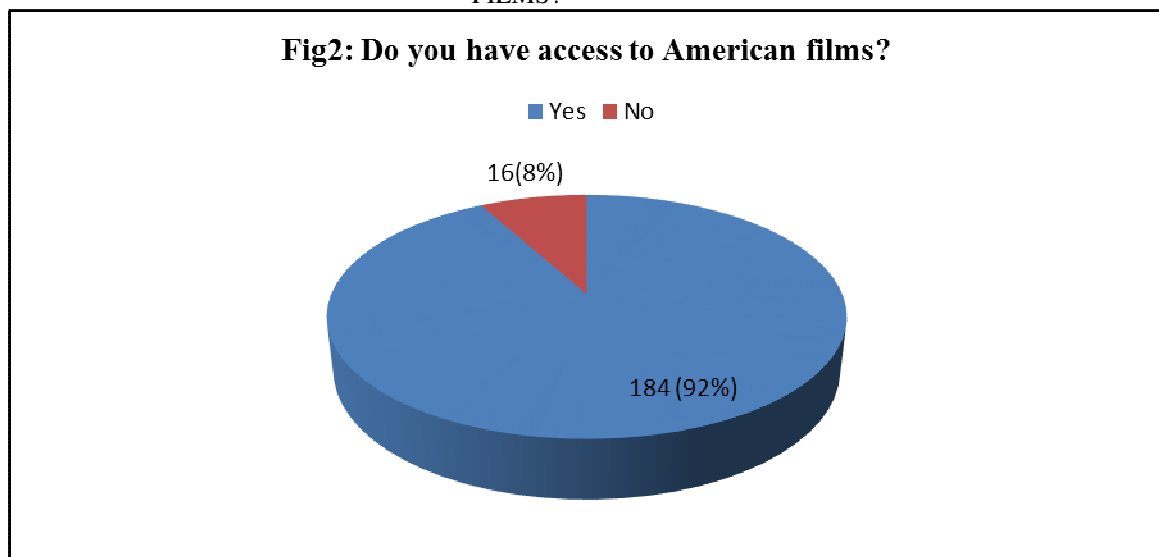


Figure 1 above shows the information gathered on whether youths in Taraba State University have access/exposed to themselves to American films. Base on the responses 184 respondents representing 92% have access to American films, whereas, 16 respondents representing 8% do not have access to American films. This implies that most of the respondents have access to American films at one point or the other.

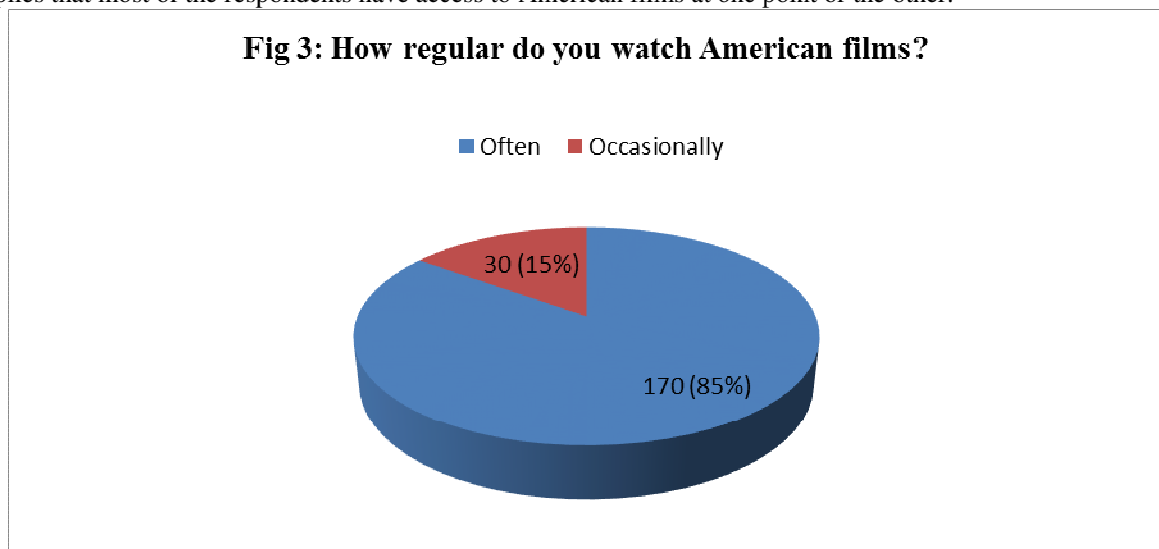


Fig 3 above shows the frequency of exposure of respondents to American films. 170 respondents representing 85% consented that they watch American films often, while 30 respondents representing 15% agreed that they watch American films occasionally. This means that most of the respondents watch American films often and this could be the reason for its massive influence.

Fig 4 Which American film genre do you watch the most??

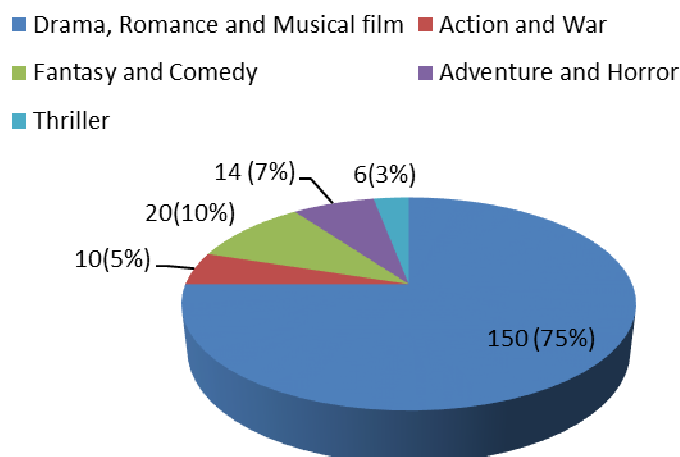


Fig 4 above shows the genre of American films that the respondents expose themselves more to. 150 respondents representing 75% opined that they watch romance, drama and musical films more than any other forms of American films. This could be due to the kind of costumes used in such movies that captivates the hearts and minds of the youths. 20 respondents representing 10% agreed to watching Fantasy and Comedy, 14 respondents representing 7% agreed to adventure and horror, 10 respondents making 5% concurred to action and war, whereas 6 respondents agreed that thriller films influences youth dressing style the more. This implies that, Romance, Drama and Musical films are most preferred by youths, therefore, they expose themselves to such types of American films than any other.

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO

TO WHAT EXTENT HAS THE EXPOSURE TO WESTERN FILMS INFLUENCE THE DRESSING PATTERN OF TARABA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS?

Fig 5: What you see on American films influences your dressing mode?

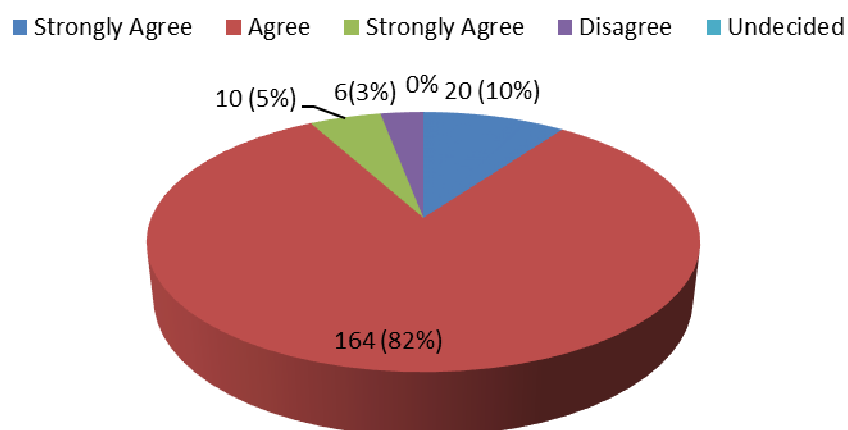


Figure 5 above shows the influence of American films on youth dressing. 164 (82%) respondents agreed that American film influences their dressing. 20 (10%) respondents strongly agreed that American films influence their dressing, while 10 (5%) respondents strongly disagreed that their dressing are influenced by American films, and 6 (3%) respondents disagreed to the assertion that American film's also influence youth dressing. This implies that to a large extent American films influences the dressing style/pattern of youths in

tertiary institutions especially Taraba state University.

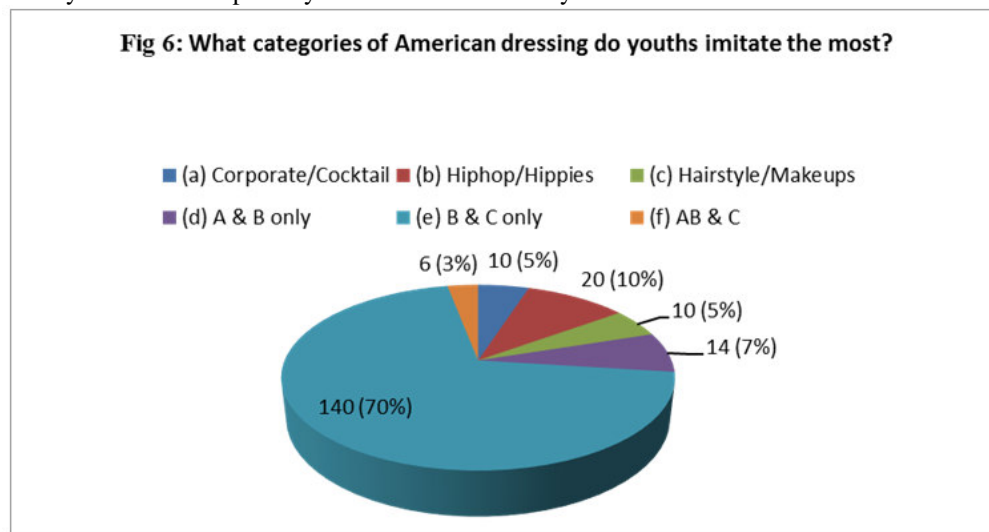


Figure above shows the dressing in American films youths imitate the most. 140 respondents representing 70% opined that the hairstyles/ make ups and hip hop/hippies dressings are the most imitated form of dressing by youths who watch American films. 20 respondents representing 10% agreed to Hip hop/Hippies, 14 respondents representing 7% agreed to corporate/cocktail and hip hop/hippies only while 10 respondents representing 5% agreed to corporate/cocktail only, and 6 respondents representing 3% agreed that corporate/cocktail, hip hop/hippies and hairstyles/make-up are being imitated by youths the most. From the foregoing, it could be deduced that hairstyles/make ups and hip hop/hippies are the most imitated forms of dressing by youths who watch American films. This could be as a result of the ever changing fashionable nature of these kinds of dressing.

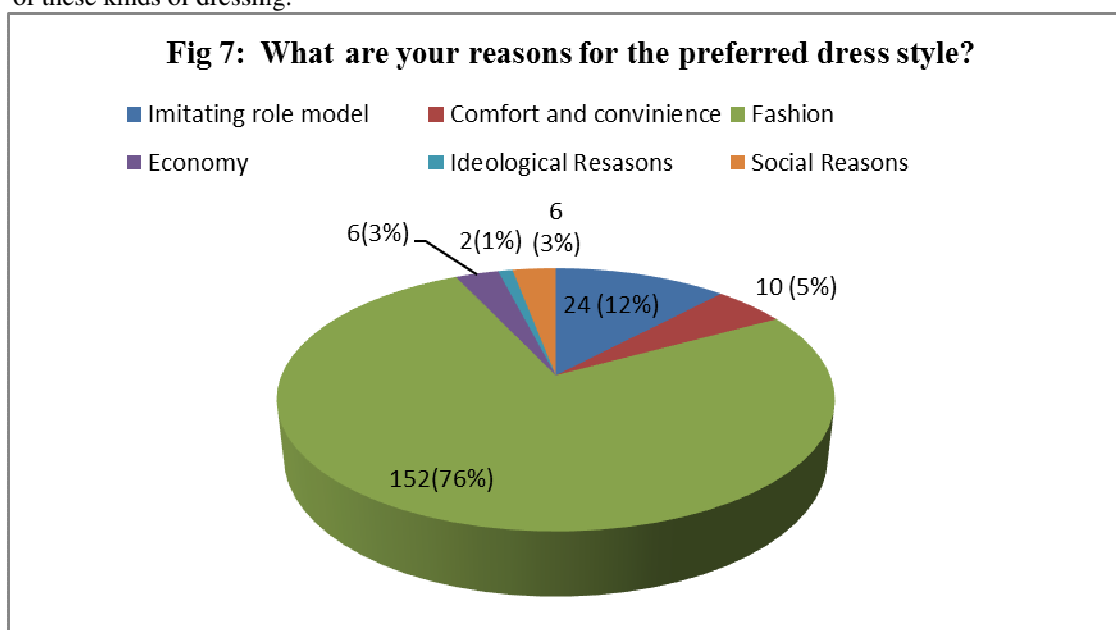


Figure 7 above shows the reasons for respondent's preferred dress style. 152 of the respondents representing 76% opined to fashion as the reasons behind their preferred dress style. 24 respondents representing 15% agreed to imitating role model, 10 respondents making 5% opined to comfort/convenience, 6 respondents representing 3% agreed to economical reasons and 6 other respondents representing 3% agreed to social reasons as to the reasons behind their preferred dress styles. This implies that most youth's preference to dressing style in American films is due to fashion. Some of them also do so to imitate role model/movie stars.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE

HOW CAN YOUTH BE DISSUADED TOWARD INDECENT DRESSING?

Can Youth dressing be changed? If yes, how can this be done?

The following are suggestions given by the respondents on how youth dressings can be change?

1. Setting and enforcing strict dressing code in Tertiary Institutions especially Taraba State University.
2. Proper Parenting and Counseling
3. Uncompromising religious teachings; through regular sermons or preaching as well as counseling, Pastors and Imams should insist on the need for decent dressing.
4. Formation of campus brigade; this is to stand against indecent dressing by sensitizing and promoting good moral values among students.
5. Making judicious use of the mass media via jingles that promote moral values and the sanctity of sex and produce Programs that sample opinions of Nigerians on indecent dressing.

8. Discussions of findings

Findings of this study clearly shows that western films (American Films) influences youth dressing style and preference. Findings further reveals that most of the students in Taraba state University are exposed to American films and they regularly watch it. Exploring the most viewed forms of American movies by the respondents; the study reveals that the drama, romance and musical movies are most preferred by youths than any other one. Findings further reveals that youths imitate the hip hop/hippies and the hairstyles/makes ups more than any other forms of dressing projected in American films. This is because the different forms of costumes and dressing used in these kinds of movies are appealing to the youths who watch them. Weitzer & Kubrin (2004) suggest that films are able to provide knowledge on fashion/dressing to the audience because films are highly visual and seeing something on film may have an impact on them. According to (Mohd Yusof, 2006; Saodah, 2006), films affects not only the knowledge of the audience, but also the attitudes such as the desire for products and brand preferences. This study reveals that films, to some extent, are very influential on youth clothes shopping behaviour especially for the adolescents and the young adult group.

Findings further reveals that youths imitate these forms of dressing due to the trend in fashion as well as imitating a role model. Hoffner and Buchanan (2005) found that attractiveness of the movie character associated with the rating of female character with their wishful identification could lead to modeling effect in terms of the appearance of the women. Therefore, women are more likely to consciously model their own appearance after the model character. This leads to making TV character appealing as role models to young adults, especially women. This in turn gives an emphasis on the unique connection between audience and the media figures.

Findings further reveals that it is possible for youths to be dissuaded from indecent (informal dressing) exposed to on western films and these could be done through setting and enforcing strict dressing code in tertiary institutions, proper parenting and counseling, formation of campus brigade to curb indecent dressing.

9. Summary/Conclusion and Recommendations

American films exert great influence on the dressing pattern of youths in tertiary institutions. The hip hop/hippies and makeup/hairstyles have become the other of the day as youths see these forms of dressing as the best neglecting their cultural norms and thereby imitating whatever they see on screen which mostly contradicts their cultural values and norms. Against this backdrop this paper proffer the following recommendations.

- (i) Universities and other tertiary institutions should take the issue of dress code serious, punishing students who are found wanting.
- (ii) "Charity begins at home". Parents should take time to teach their wards good morals relating to dressing as embedded in African society. Parents and guardians should openly frown at indecent dressing projected on television before their children.
- (iii) Programs that sample opinions of Nigerians on indecent dressing should be regularly put in place in addition to debates on the issue by youths in institutions of learning as means of effective sensitization.